

CERBERUS, the porter of helle, with his three hevedes, was caught and al abayst for the newe song; and the three goddesses, furies, and vengeresses of felonyes, that tormenten and agasten the sowles by anoy, woxen sorwful and sory, & wepen teres for pitee. Thone was nat the heved of Ixion ytormented by the overthrowinge wheel; and Tantalus, that was destroyed by the woodnesse of longe thurst, despyseth the flodes to drinke; the fowl that highte voltor, that eteth the stomak or the giser of Tityus, is so fulfild of his song that it nil eten ne tyren no more. At the laste the lord and juge of sowles was moeved to misericordes and cryde, We ben overcomen, quod he; yive we to Orpheus his wyf to bere him companye; he hath wel ybought hir by his song and his ditee; but we wol putte a lawe in this, and covenant in the yifte: that is to seyn, that, til he be out of helle, yif he loke behinde him, that his wyf shal comen

ayein unto us.

BUT what is he that may yive a lawe to lovers? Love is a gretter lawe and a stronger to himself than any lawe and that men may yeven. Alas! whan Orpheus and his wyf weren almost at the termes of the night, that is to seyn, at the laste boundes of helle, Orpheus lokede abak and was deed.

THIS fable aperteineth to yow alle, whosoever desireth or seketh to lede his thought into the sovereyn good, for whoso that ever besovercomen that he ficche his eyen into the putte of helle, that is to seyn, whoso sette his thoughtes in erthely thinges, al that ever he hath drawn of the noble good celestial, he leseth it whan he loketh the helles, that is to seyn, into lowe thinges of the erthe.

Explicit Liber tercius.

DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIE. BOOK IV. PROSE I.

Hec cum Philosophia, dignitate vultus.

IHANNE hadde songen softly and delicably the forseide thinges, kepinge the dignitee of hir chere and the weighte of hir wordes. I thanne, that ne hadde nat alouterly foryetten the wepinge and the mourninge that was set in myn herte, for brak the entencioun of hir that entendede yit to seyn some othere thinges. O, quod I, thou that art gyderesse of verrey light; the thinges that thou hast seid me hiderto ben so clere to me and so shewing by the devyne lookinge of hem, & by thy resouns, that they ne mowen ben overcomen. And thilke thinges that thou toldest me, albeit so that I hadde whylom foryetten hem, for the sorwe of the wrong that hath ben don to me, yit natheles they ne weren nat alouterly unknowen to me. But this same is, namely, a right greet cause of my sorwe, so as the governour of thinges is good, yif that yveles mowen ben by any weyes; or elles yif that yveles passen withoute punisshinge. The whiche thing only, how worthy it is to ben wondred upon, thou considerest it wel thyself certainly. But yit to this thing ther is yit another thing yjoined, more to ben wondred upon. for felonye is emperesse, and floureth ful of riches; and vertu nis nat alonly withoute medes, but it is cast under & fortroden under the feet of felon-

ous folk; and it abyeth the tormentes in stede of wikkede felounes. Of alle whiche thinges ther nis no wight that may merveylen ynough, ne compleine, that swiche thinges ben doon in the regne of God, that alle thinges woot & alle thinges may, and ne wole nat but only gode thinges.

IHANNE seyde she thus: Certes, quod she, that were a greet merveyle, & an embasshinge withouten ende, and wel more horrible than alle monstres, yif it were as thou wenest; that is to seyn, that in the right ordenee hous of so mochel a fader & an ordenour of meynce, that the vesseles that ben foule and vyle sholden ben honoured and heried, and the precious vesseles sholden ben defouled & vyle; but it nis nat so. for yif tho thinges that I have concluded a litel herbifore ben kept hole & unraced, thou shalt wel knowe by the autoritee of God, of the whos regne I speke, that certes the gode folk ben alway mighty, and shrewes ben alway outcast and feble; ne the vyces ne ben nevermo withoute peyne, ne the vertues ne ben nat withoute mede; & that blisfulnesse comen alway to goode folk, and infortune comth alway to wikked folk. And thou shalt wel knowe many thinges of this kinde, that shollen cesen thy pleintes, and strengthen thee with stedefast sadnesse. And for thou hast seyn the forme of the verray blisfulnesse by me, that have whylom shewed it thee, and thou hast knownen in whom blisfulnesse is yset, alle thinges ytrete that I trowe ben necessarie to putten forth, I shal shewe thee the wey that

shal bringen thee ayein unto thyn hous. And I shal hechen fetheres in thy thought, by whiche it may arysen in heighte, so that, alle tribulacioun ydon away, thou, by my gydinge and by my path & by my sledes, shalt mowe retorne hool and sound into thy contree.

Metre I.

Sunt etenim pennae volucres mihi.

IHAVE, forsothe, swifte fetheres that surmounten the heighte of hevене. Whan the swifte thought hath clothed itself in tho fetheres, it despyseth the hateful erthes, and surmounteth the roundnesse of the grete ayr; and it seeth the cloudes behinde his bak; and passeth the heighte of the region of the fyr, that eschaufeth by the swifte moevinge of the firmament, til that he aryseth him into the houses that beren the sterres, & joyneth his weyes with the sonne Phebus, and felawshipeth the wey of the olde colde Saturnus; & he ymaketh a might of the clere sterre; that is to seyn, that the thought is maketh Goddes knight by the seking of trouthe to comen to the verray knowleche of God. And thilke thought renneth by the cercele of the sterres, in alle places theras the shyninge night is painted; that is to seyn, the night that is cloudeles; for on nightes that ben cloudeles it semeth as the hevене were painted with dyverse images of sterres. And whanne he hath ydoon ther ynough, he shal forleten the laste hevене, and he shal pressen & wenden on the bak of the swifte firmament, and he shal ben maketh parfit of the worshipful light of God. Ther halt the lord of kinges the ceptre of his might, and atempreth the governements of the world, and the shyninge juge of thinges, stable in himself, governeth the swifte cart or wayn, that is to seyn, the circular moevinge of the sonne. And yif thy wey ledeth thee ayein so that thou be brought thider, thanne wolt thou seye now that that is the contree that thou requerest, of which thou ne haddest no minde: But now it remembreth me wel, heer was I born, heer wol I fastne my degree, heer wole I dwelle. But yif thee lyketh thanne to loken on the clerknesse of the erthe that thou hast forleten, thanne shalt thou seen that thise felonous tyrants, that the wrecchede people dredeth, now shollen ben exyled fro thilke fayre contree.

Prose II.

Cum ego, Papae, inquam.

IHANNE seyde I thus: Ow! I wondre me that thou bihest me so grete thinges; ne I ne doute nat that thou ne mayst wel performe that thou bihest. But I preye thee only this, that thou ne tarye nat to telle me thilke thinges that thou hast moeved.

FIRST, quod she, thou most nedes knowen, that goode folk ben alway stronge & mighty, & the shrewes ben feble and desert and naked of alle strengthes. And of thise thinges, certes, everich of hem is declared and shewed by other. for so as good and yvel ben two contraries, yif so be that good be stedefast, than sheweth the feblesse of yvel al openly; & yif thou knowe clearly the frelenesse of yvel, the stedefastnesse of good is knowen. But for as moche as the fey of my sentence shal be the more ferme and haboundant, I will gon by that oo wey and by that other; and I wole conferme the thinges that ben purposed, now on this syde and now on that syde. Two thinges ther ben in whiche the effect of alle the dedes of mankinde standeth, that is to seyn, wil and power; and yif that oon of thise two fayleth, ther nis nothing that may be don. for yif that wil lakketh, ther nis no wight that undertaketh to don that he wol nat don; and yif power fayleth, the wil nis but in ydel and stant for naught. And therof cometh it, that yif thou see a wight that wolde geten that he may nat geten, thou mayst nat doute that power ne fayleth him to haven that he wolde. This is open and cleer, quod I; ne it may nat ben denyed in no manere. And yif thou see a wight, quod she, that hath doon that he wolde doon, thou nilt nat doute that he ne hath had power to don it? No, quod I. And in that that every wight may, in that men may holden him mighty; as who seyth, in so moche as man is mighty to don a thing, in so moche men halt him mighty; and in that that he ne may, in that men demen him to be feble. I confesse it wel, quod I. Remembreth thee, quod she, that I have gadered & shewed by forseide resouns that al the entencioun of the wil of mankinde, which that is lad by dyverse studies, hasteth to comen to blisfulnesse? It remembreth me wel, quod I, that it hath ben shewed. And recordeth thee nat thanne, quod she, that blisfulnesse is thilke same good that men requeren; so

Boethius de Consolatione Philosophie. Book IV.